



“The Ghost and Facebook”

Text by [Andrus Kivirähk](#)

Illustrated by [Heiki Ernits](#)

Varrak 2019, 128 pp

ISBN 9789985347225

Storybook, fiction

Age: 6+

Rights sold: Hungarian, Latvian

The cast of characters in Andrus Kivirähk’s new collection of children’s stories includes ghosts and laptops, dogs and cats, kids and grown-ups, sauna whisks and caterpillars. They build birdhouses, go to plays, grow nettles, and take trips to The Avocado. A year simply flies by when you have good friends and exciting individuals all around. You’re made stronger by your escapades and find yourself quite many an experience richer. Perhaps there are even readers with enough resolve to extract and ponder a thing or two from between the lines of Kivirähk’s humorous and fantastical writing!

Awards:

2020 Nukits Competition, 1st place for text and illustrations

2019 Nominee of the Annual Children’s Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia

2019 Good Children’s Book

Reading sample

The Laptop Goes Wild

The laptop was shiny, little, and nice. People liked to hold it in their lap, where it would show fun little videos and play soft music. Sometimes, the people would even take the laptop along to bed and when they fell asleep, it would doze on the pillow next to them.

The laptop was a little afraid of the other appliances—for instance, the vacuum cleaner made a frightful noise and the refrigerator was just so big and cold that even the sight of it gave the laptop the chills. Still, the laptop didn't really need to make friends with the vacuum cleaner or the refrigerator—it was made for people and they loved it and cared for it dearly.

Whenever the people weren't home, the laptop would lie on the table waiting for its family to come back and hold it in their laps again. One day when it was lounging and passing away the time, a cat peered in through the open window.

"Hi!" said the cat. "What kind of creature are you?"

"I'm a laptop," the laptop replied.

"That's too bad," reckoned the cat. "People used to want to hold me in their laps all the time, too. They'd hug me and pet me and lug me around all sorts of different ways. I was never, ever allowed to go outside—just like being in jail, peeing in a cardboard box! I didn't enjoy that kind of life at all; I wanted to be free! One day, I jumped out the window and ran into the woods. Oh, how wonderful it is there! You can climb trees; you can catch mice. You can do anything you want—no one tells you no and nobody picks you up and puts you in their lap."

The laptop found the cat's story thrilling. Of course, it did enjoy sitting in people's laps, but at the same time ... it wouldn't be so bad to adventure a bit and have a look around the world, now would it? The laptop had never been outside before.

"What do you reckon—could I come into the woods for a little while, too?" it asked.

"Sure thing!" said the cat. "Enough of this sitting around inside! You've got to live an exciting life, not one under somebody's arm."

So, the laptop climbed out the window. It absolutely loved the fresh breeze, the white clouds, and the birds wheeling around the sky. Trotting behind the cat, it disappeared between the trees.

When the people came home that evening, they couldn't find the laptop anywhere. They looked high and low, but it was gone! Discovering the open window, the people figured that someone had stolen the laptop, so they went to the police. However, they found no help there either—the laptop was simply gone without a trace.

Many months passed. Summer turned to fall, which turned to winter. When spring arrived, a strange creature emerged from the woods.

It was furry from head to toe and had grown very long claws, which clacked on the floor as it came inside and announced in a husky voice:

"Hey, you gu-uys! I'm home again!"

At first, the people thought a wild boar had invaded their home and they started crying out for help. Yet, upon closer inspection of the creature, they realized it wasn't a boar at all, but their laptop that had disappeared last year!

Even so, it was no longer a laptop that wanted to sit in people's laps. Living in the woods had made the computer brawnier—it was now strong and brave. When the vacuum cleaner started rumbling, all it took was a single growl from the laptop to make it go silent at once in fear. Meanwhile, the big refrigerator started thawing in shock at the sight of the furry device.

The laptop still showed videos, though they were very different from the ones it played before—these were action-packed and a little scary. And whenever the computer played music, it was no longer soft and mellow, but so rough that the lightbulbs started to sway.

The laptop would still let the people hold it in their laps, but it refused to crawl into bed at night.

“I’m hot being inside,” it said. “Build me a doghouse outside and I’ll sleep there.”

And that’s just what they did.

The Inflatable Grandpa

Ann had an inflatable swan. Marcus had an inflatable shark. Edward had an inflatable crocodile. It was summer and the weather was hot, meaning the kids would be able to go to the beach and have so much fun in the water with their inflatable animals that it’d bubble like a whirlpool. Unfortunately, there was a rule that said little kids weren’t allowed to go swimming without having adults around.

These adults, on the other hand, were awfully busy all summer long! If they weren’t mowing the lawn, then they were probably painting the fence, after which they needed to trim the lilac bushes and weed the flowerbeds. Ann’s dad was even working on fixing their roof. None of them had time to go to the beach.

“What’s the point in going out to the country in summertime when all adults do is work here, too?” Marcus grumbled. “Just stay put in the city!”

Ann and Edward sighed. The inflatable animals had very sad faces, too.

Suddenly, Linda came around the corner carrying a flower-print beach bag over her shoulder.

“Let’s go swimming!” she called out.

“We’re not allowed to go without a mom or a dad,” Edward growled. “There has to be at least one grown-up keeping an eye on the kids—that’s what they tell us.”

“My grandpa will do it,” Linda said. She took a rolled-up object out of her bag and started blowing it up with air.

“What kind of animal do you have there?” Marcus asked. “A big bunny?”

“More like a panda,” Ann suggested.

It was hard for Linda to talk as she blew, but she tried all the same.

“It’s not an animal at all,” she said through gritted teeth. “It’s a grandpa. An inflatable grandpa. I bought it from the store yesterday.”

“An inflatable grandpa?” the others echoed and burst out laughing.

However, the longer that Linda blew, the less the kids laughed, because it really was a grandpa! One with a long, white beard. The grandpa was quite saggy and wrinkly at first, but the more he was filled up with air, the fatter he became. In the end, he was rather plump and round—almost like a ball.

“Finished!” Linda exclaimed, capping the grandpa’s blow tube.

The inflatable grandpa smiled kindly and said:

“It’s pretty nice out today—what do you say we all go swimming? And buy ourselves some ice cream, too, of course!”

He didn’t have to say it twice! Obviously, they headed straight to the beach; obviously, the grandpa bought all the kids ice cream and soft drinks; and obviously, they all horsed around by the sea until dinnertime.

The whole time they were there, the grandpa just floated peacefully on the waves and didn’t eat anything.

“My belly’s full of air,” he explained.

Before going home, the kids deflated their rubber animals and Linda rolled up her grandpa.

“That’s an amazing grandpa you’ve got there!”
Marcus praised. “I’d sure like to have a grandpa like
him!”

“We would, too!” Edward and Ann exclaimed.

“Well, the store is still open—let’s go buy some!”
Linda proposed.

So, the kids ran home, shook money out of their
piggy banks, and went to buy their very own inflata-
ble grandpas. Ann’s had a red beard, Edward’s had a
black beard, and Marcus’s was bald and clean-shav-
en.

The next day at the beach was even more fun than
the one before. All the while, the moms and dads
were able to do their boring chores in peace, be-
cause inflatable grandpas were looking after the kids
and playing bridge together.

Translated by Adam Cullen